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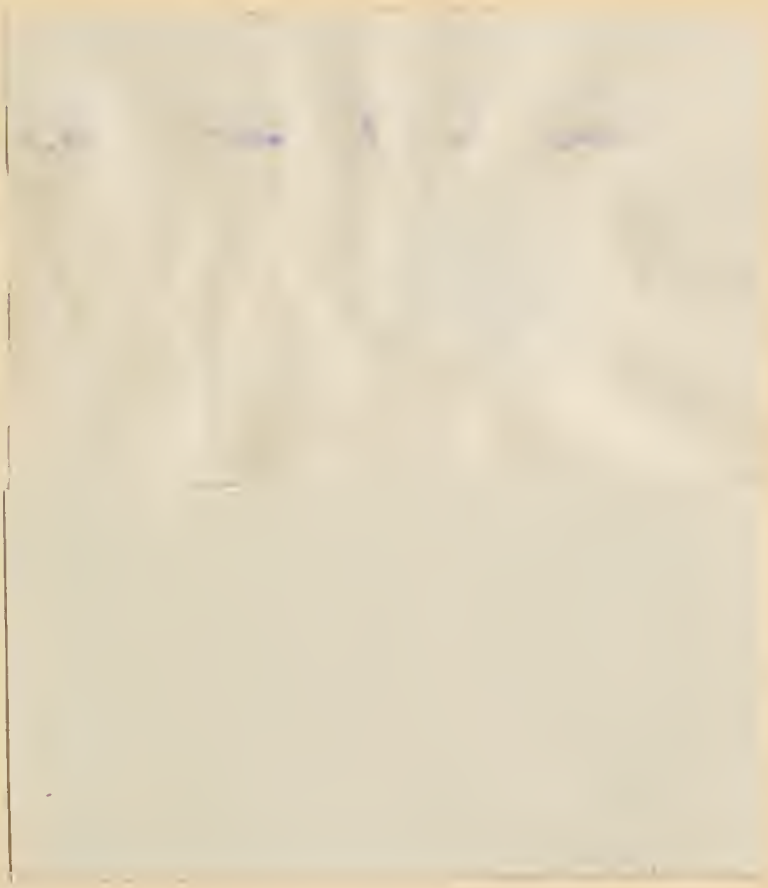

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E. W. DENNISON

E. W. DENNISON

A MEMORIAL

BOSTON
1909

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D. B. UPDIKE, THE MERRYMOUNT PRESS, BOSTON

E W D Tennison

PREFACE

THE purpose of this book is fulfilled if it reaches those who knew and loved Mr. Dennison and those who know his spirit and love the work which embodies it. To such, any true attempt to put into permanent form an account of his life is its own excuse.

The truth of the picture is of paramount importance. Seen only through another's eyes it would of necessity lose some of its life and value; what may be proper biographical form has therefore been sacrificed to allow a more than liberal introduction of Mr. Dennison's letters. To some the man will be known and the letters new; to them their reading will be a delight. To many, however, the man is hardly more than a tradition; for them there will be no way to gain so full an appreciation of his personality as by seeing for themselves the letters in which it found expression.

It may with good reason be believed that a knowledge of his character will offer greater inspiration than that of many more famous men; for he had no talent or virtue unattainable by any normal man. Above all else he was human, and was great simply in the perfecting of many good qualities and in the

disinterested and loyal devotion of his life to whatever work he found at his hand.

In a small way this book may perhaps continue the work to which E. W. Dennison dedicated his life,—the helping and inspiring of his fellow-men.

E. W. DENNISON

I

FROM its first settlement in this country, the Dennison stock has always produced typical New Englanders. The sea has called to some of its men; many have found their success in farming; more have been artisans, shipbuilders, joiners, or carpenters; and not a few have shown unusual skill and inventive genius in the chosen work of their hands. Throughout the family there seems to have been a love of work for its own sake, which found expression in the most immediate and practical ways.

The founder of the Dennison family in America was George Dennison, who was born in Dublin, Ireland, in 1695, of English parentage. His education in the College of Dublin had just begun when, in 1712, he was seized and impressed for service aboard an English man-of-war. Soon after, in the port of Boston, he made his escape, found employment in a commercial house, and began his career as an American colonist.

At full manhood he had established himself as a master mariner and fisherman at Gloucester, sending his vessels to the Banks on many

a successful trip. David and Abner, two of his seven children, left the old Annisquam homestead in 1757, to become pioneers in the lumber trade in Maine; and twenty years later David's eldest son, also named David, enlisted in the Continental army at the age of fifteen, serving in the battles of Monmouth and Saratoga, and through the bitter Valley Forge winter. Returning from the war he was married at his home in Freeport, Maine. There Andrew, the second of his fifteen children, born in 1786, was brought up to learn the shoemaker's trade, and at his majority moved to Topsham to practise it. Long service in the state militia advanced Andrew to the rank of colonel, and by that title he was known to his townsfolk, among whom he stood in high regard as a wise and careful man of assured integrity. In 1807 he married Lydia Lufkin, and of their ten children Aaron was the third, and Eliphalet Whorf Dennison, born November 23, 1819, was the sixth.

When Eliphalet was five years old the family moved across the river to Brunswick, and there the children grew up in the healthful life of the farm, the busy Colonel following his cobbler's trade and farming at the same time. Eliphalet earned his education by building fires

Col. Andrew Dennison

and sweeping out the school-house, but when he was seventeen he felt that the time had come when he should strike out for himself, and relieve his father of part of the heavy burden he was carrying. His older brother Aaron had already gone to Boston, and thither he followed him in the fall of 1836.

The first letter of his which has been saved tells of his early days there in a most ingenuous and lovable fashion.

BOSTON, *Nov.* 3, 1836

DEAR SISTER:

As I have nothing to do I thought I would write you a few lines to let you know how I have passed my time since I have been here and how I like, etc. The first three days I came here I had nothing to do but travel around and see what I could, but I soon got tired of that, and the fourth morning Aaron said he had got a place for me in a shoe-store. I felt sorry to have to go into a shoe-store, but it is as good a business in the city as any. The men that I live with are very clever so far as I am acquainted with them. The store in which I keep is in about the centre of the city, 214 Washington Street, and the house is on Front Street, and I have to go

about as far as our house to the field to get my meals, and I room with Aaron as yet, but I expect to room with the Haynes's soon, for Aaron said he made a bargain this morning, and I am to have $40 the first year and boarded, and $60 the next, and so on until I am twenty-one years old.

I like the city considerable well, but I would rather be at home, that is a fact. I can't write any more today. I will finish Monday.

Monday

I told you I should finish writing today. I shall now do it. We are very sorry to hear Benj. is sick, but glad to know that he is in good hands. We received a paper this morning, stating that you would write the particulars today, which we are anxious to know. William Jordan is going home tomorrow, and I send this by him. I want you to tell Benj. to bring my skates and bosom-pin if he gets able to come up soon. I don't know but I can get a chance to go skating Thanksgiving Day, and if I can I want to improve it, for it will be the only chance I can get. I called on Stephen Haynes last evening and was very much pleased with his wife and himself. They live in pretty good style, but you have to go

up three flights of stairs before you get to where they live in the fourth story, which you would think was a dreadful thing. I would, would n't you? As I was coming home from meeting I passed by a large block of houses and I thought I would count them. There were twenty houses, all of them four stories high and as large as Governor Dunlap's, which made a row about as long as from our house to the bottom of the hill. I have seen a good many things that would make you stare, but Aaron and Benjamin did not at first allow me to look anyway but straight ahead.

I have had the worst cold since Saturday that I ever had in my life. Aaron and I went to the Old Clothes Dealers to see if we could not get a cloak, but could n't find any to suit, so I suppose I shall have to get a new one.

I met Caroline Weld on the street the other Sunday going to meeting, but she did not see me, therefore I did not speak to her. I want you to write me a good long letter the first time you get a chance and tell me all about the girls and everything. Don't omit putting in something about the old horse and how the potatoes turned out, and if good for anything. Give my love to all my old acquaintances. I want to know if you have heard from Aunt

Esther's folks since I came away. If you have I want you to tell me what it is. I can't write any more at present, so I must bid you good-bye.

From your affectionate brother,

E. W. DENNISON

P. S. Tell mother the folks do my washing for me.

In the shoe-store Eliphalet remained six months and then took a position as salesman in the wholesale dry-goods store of Burnham & Dow, on Water Street, with whom he stayed three years. A letter to his father, a year and a half later, shows remarkable progress towards assurance and good judgment.

BOSTON, *June* 22, 1838

DEAR FATHER:

I FEEL ashamed of myself for neglecting to write so long, for which I have no sufficient excuse unless it is my extremely bad writing. It was my intention to have gone to writing-school before this, but I thought it better to wait until I got better able and at least until I got back from my visit, for when I go I want to take right hold and keep the books of

Dennison Homestead in Brunswick

the store, so that if I get a good handwriting I can keep it. Mr. Chafin promises me that he will teach me how to keep books if I learn to write. I expect to find some trouble on account of being so bad a mathematician, but practice will remedy that. Mr. Chafin is a first-rate bookkeeper, and no doubt I shall do well under his tuition. He is one of the finest men that I ever knew. He treats me like a brother. I have never had a hard word from him yet, though there have been a good many times that I thought I deserved it. After all I have some objections to my place. They don't do quite as much business as I should like, but I believe they calculate to do rather more this Fall. They have n't got their credit firmly established yet, being young men,—all of which is a great consideration in these critical times. They have a lawsuit pending which will probably turn in their favor and bring in $8000 or $10,000. This will be a great help to them.

I am glad to hear such good accounts from your farming business as I do. It is truly cheering in these hard times. It seems to me that you have got a more than usual quantity of corn planted this year. I should think you would find it hard work to tend it alone. I should think you would do well to take

John H. Wilson, Jr., to bring up. He is so large now that he might be considerable help to you. He is naturally a smart fellow.

You say that Aaron speaks highly of my business qualifications, but that my other qualities are spoken rather slightingly of. He seems to dwell strongly on extravagance in clothing. I presume he has spoken to you about a coat and pair of pantaloons. These are the only times that I have not gone perfectly by his instructions, and when you hear my reasons for disagreeing with him in these, hope you won't put quite so much blame on me as you do now. Poor brother, he seems to be kicked by everybody. He was rather blue about a month ago when he began to work evenings, but he seems to be in good spirits now. He has made out much better than he anticipated in his plan of paying debts. I think he would be entirely out of his element if he were out of debt. He has been made uneasy several times lately by the receipt of small parcels of money from persons that he had lent it to to get home with. This was so uncommon an occurrence that he thought they must be crazy or foolish. I believe it is his intention to bequeath such money as he gets in this way to the "Society for Alleviating the Condition of the In-

dians." If he were to get all the money due him in this way, and should save it, he would have a very good capital to set up in business with.

It is my intention to make my usual visit in August sometime. I will let you know before the time comes. I want to know if you could accommodate Horatio. He is not well and wants to go into the country to rusticate a little while. He is a great genius and my particular friend. If you have n't bedroom for both of us, we can sleep at the tavern. Ben will tell you what kind of a fellow he is. I have n't time to write any more. I shall send this by Mr. Swain if I can get to the boat before it goes.

Excuse mistakes,—I have n't time to look it over.

Your affectionate son,

E. W. DENNISON

By the time Eliphalet left the dry-goods store mentioned in this letter, Aaron had already settled into watch-making, the work to which he gave the rest of his life. Eliphalet at first joined Aaron in his business, but as soon as familiar with it took a stock of jewelry and watch-maker's goods to Bath, Maine,

setting up a retail store on his own venture. Several years of alternating hope and doubt proved this trial unsuccessful, and after a short stay at his father's home he returned to Boston; but his life in Bath brought him an acquaintance with Lydia Beals, then only fourteen years old, who five years later became his wife.

Another apprenticeship at the jeweler's trade had mended his resources sufficiently to allow his yielding again to that deep impulse for independence which was striving for the best form of its self-expression. With his retail stock he started again, this time in Bangor. His letters to his father tell the story of this second step in the search for a life-work, and give many glimpses of the character just then beginning to form itself along definite lines. In each letter there is a strong undertone of love and admiration for his father, and loyalty to his home and family; and in each is evident the love of work which, with the courageous optimism that gave him faith to fight to the last ditch, formed the basis for that inexhaustible enthusiasm which characterized his later business life. It is discernible, however, that his whole heart was not actually given to the jewelry business, and

that the inherited desire to make something would not allow him to rest satisfied in it.

May, 1842

DEAR FATHER:

FROM the tone of your letter I should suppose that you were having uncommonly dark times now in Brunswick. All the consolation I can offer is that there will finally be an opening as there has always been heretofore. If business should continue as good as it has been, I should advise you by all means to come down here, but as business may fall off, I not being firmly established as yet, I should vote it rather unsafe to make the attempt immediately. The prospect is decidedly flattering for us now. How long it will be so I cannot tell. My profits last week amounted to $49.57. This, however, is more than double the amount of any other week. Business has greatly increased since I came here and must continue to do so. There is one thing quite certain,—that I shall not be able to meet my six months' paper, but as it was understood that I should have lenity when I began, I shall expect it. All is, if my creditors are not satisfied with my course they must come upon me

in the natural way, and I must slope to Texas.

It appears to me that if I had you and mother here, and all my debts paid, I should be perfectly happy. I like my boarding-house as well as any possible boarding-house except one.

The people of Bangor I like much. They seem open-hearted and generous. I don't know that I should want a better place for residence than this, should business continue as good as it has been. There is not a stand in the state that I would change mine for. I never saw a stand so prominently good as mine is. It is situated on the corner of the two principal streets and makes into the square called West Market Square. This is a large square around which are situated the stores that bring the highest rents, say from $400 to $500 a year. My store is fitted up in good but economical style and my stock of goods better than all the rest put together. My principal competitor is not worth the notice of any man. To give you some idea of him, he is one of those men who will sneak around; for instance, he never has been to my store when I was in, but when he knows that I am out, he will creep in and take a view of my stock, making such remarks as he pleases,

any place in the city, at his store, corner of Washington and Eliot streets.—*Boston Herald.*

For sale by G. W. LADD. jan 18

MARINE INTELLIGENCE.

Jan. 15, sailed from Frankfort, Sch Mechanic, Andrews, Boston; Mirror, Haskell, do; brig Brazilian, Hitchbon, Porto Rico.

16th, brig Tonquin, Norton, Matanzas.

Ar at New Orleans, brig Gleaner, Richardson, Mount Desert; F. P. Beck, Stackpole, Thomaston; towed to sea, about 30th, brig Lime Rock.

Advertised, ship Dunbarton, from Liverpool, wanting 200 bales cotton.

NEW STORE.

JEWELRY, &c.

A NEW and rich Stock, consisting in part of *Gold and Silver Watches, Silver Spoons, Jewelry, Spectacles, Thimbles, Pencils, Pen Knives, Razors, Scissors, Combs, Brushes, Perfumery,* &c. &c. &c. E. W. DENNISON & CO.,

jan 18 tf No. 3 Kenduskeag Bridge.

VOL. 23 PICKERING'S REPORTS.
Just received, and for sale by
jan 19 SMITH & FENNO.

BOSTON ALMANAC.
ANOTHER supply of this pretty little annual, just received by
jan 19 SMITH & FENNO.

BOOTS, BOOTS.
A FEW more CASES of those extra heavy Calfskin *BOOTS*—just received at
jan 19 RICE & GODFREY'S,
No. 2 West Market Square.

FRENCH SHOES.
RICE & GODFREY have just received a lot of real *French Shoes,* which they will sell at the *very low price of One Dollar per pair.*

Also—A lot of Bronze KID SLIPPERS, and TIES—LEATHER PUMPS, and WALKING SHOES, &c. jan 19

Bangor Whig & Courier

NEW & SAYWARD, OVER THE POST OFFICE, WEST MARKET PLA

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 19, 1842.

Sept 13 wtf

SHINGLE

MORTO
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THE ELM HOUSE,
AND
GENERAL STAGE OFFICE.

The subscriber has taken the ELM HOUSE and GENERAL STAGE OFFICE, recently and for many years past, W. SAMUEL HASKELL. The House

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I hope next time I hear from you it will be rather more cheerful than the last epistle. It was really gloomy. Your family is so small that it does n't require half what it once did to support them, and considering this I should think your earnings, though small, would support them now as well as ever. If you get short, I'd manage to send you something, such as my profits would admit of, though capital cries out against it. However, I could manage to send you an X now and then if necessary. If you are bent upon moving from Brunswick, come here by all means. If I should not chance to meet with the success hoped for, you would do as well here as anywhere.

Give my love to all, especially mother.

In September of the same year—1842—he wrote again.

It is with greatest pleasure that I read your letters. It seems as though I were at home talking with you, there is so much ease in the composition. If you could spare me an evening once a week or fortnight it would be what I should delight in. You have a lasting store of good that would be interesting to me, even

if there were none of that little village news to fill in, which I read with more feeling than the great and important events of the world as they are laid down in the news of the day.

You spoke at considerable length on the election. I went the whole Whig. I find it hard to go back on the principles that were instilled in me as those were. I must vote *some* way. "Of three evils choose the least." I am more sceptical than ever in reference to that great subject of Religion. I shall try to live uprightly, and deal honestly, and trust in circumstances.

I do not know how I shall succeed in getting this store, but I have not given up the idea yet. If I do I shall want Julia. It is quite doubtful how it will turn out. I should enjoy life better if I had some one or ones with me to care for. If it were possible I should be a married man this Fall, the cautions of friends to the contrary notwithstanding; but as it is impossible owing to circumstances, friends may ease their minds on that score.

The more I see of Bangor and its people the better I like my situation. It is my whole study to establish myself firmly, so that should opposition come I shall be better able to withstand the shock. That this is destined to be

the most important town east of Boston, I am well satisfied. Soon we shall see the change manifested. For five years there has been scarcely a dwelling built; and yet there was room; now we are full to overflowing; rents enormous. This tells for the prosperity of the city. Many are little aware of the immense business carried on in this place. I did not dream of it and am daily made more sensible of it; our daily arrivals and clearances are almost equal to Boston. Business has been good with me, perhaps even better than I anticipated.

Tell mother the shirts will be most acceptable about this time. I know not when I shall be at home again, maybe soon, perhaps not.

I have written this when not waiting on customers and have frequently been called off by my work. My love to mother and all.

Your son,

ELIPHALET

In March of the following year the young jeweler reports business as being dull enough and that it makes him homesick and blue, but the deep-seated confidence in his own final ability to make good, which was the inevitable result of a combination of courage with

love of work, was not shaken. The lack of certainty in his business outlook he recognized as temporary, and on June 30, 1843, he married the girl of nineteen whom he had met five years before in Bath, Lydia Ann Beals. It was a blessing to both that their lives should have been joined at this time. In the dark hours which came so soon, and through the times of doubt which lasted many years, the husband found in his home a joy that made life more than worth the living, and gained from it ever new courage and inspiration; the wife learned to know deeply and to love every side of the man and his life's work, and through her love and appreciation to grow into full fellowship with him.

Sentences here and there in his letters give a lovable picture of their early life together, and a true promise of the forty-three happy years which were to come to them.

"Lydia is contented and happy, fat and hearty. She is more than my most sanguine expectations and seems to like her husband tolerably well. We have a girl with us who goes to school and we find her all the help we want. Lydia is a tip-top housewife, cook, etc. She sends her best respects."

"First and most important of all, health has been with truth our constant companion. Lydia Ann says she never enjoyed so good health for so long a time in her life. Mine you know is always good. Our enjoyment has been so perfect that it almost makes me fear that the future must bring some check. Such happiness as ours was never known to be lasting, and especially to one so ill deserving of it as I am."

* * *

"Lydia Ann sends her love to all and looks happy."

The happiness of the home was all needed to offset the cares of business. In December, 1843, he writes again to his father.

"I send you $10 which you wished me to. I was glad to see such a spirit manifested as was in your letter. In reading it I imagined you as much as ten years younger than reality. This makes my saying true,'that if you could content yourself to sit on your bench steadily for a period longer or shorter, it would clear you from the cursed thraldom (indebtedness) that has ever encompassed you and embittered your existence.' I am the same, and God only knows when I shall free myself. My situation

now is critical. I am worth something, but it is in goods and no sale. Unless I can raise $1000 on my stock I must ask an extension. How all this will come out time only will tell. My health was never better than it is now, and all the damper upon my perfect happiness is my pecuniary circumstances. Today I have had a good day for the first time for a long while, —sold a watch for $75 and chain for more, but business is wretchedly dull. I have n't time to write more now, but will send papers. Write oftener. By the way, do you know that that letter was the only news I had from you since I was there? My love to mother and all."

Another letter, in April of the following year, gives a somewhat brighter account.

"I was happy to receive yours. Each time I am reminded of my negligence I promise myself to do better. There is nothing under the sun to make our correspondence so scattering, and everything to make us hear from each other often. Your letters are always full of interest to me. You have a knack peculiar to yourself of relating affairs ever so minute and making them appear important and interesting. This is what does not seem to be inherited by any of us, for I am fully assured that there cannot be found more perfect doughheads in

this line than Aaron, Benj., and myself. This is nothing surprising for me, but for them, possessing as good general information as they do, it is unaccountable.

"My business is as good as could be expected considering my store. I see daily the need of a larger one and yet dare not leave this stand. I took a lease of this house the other day and have almost repented of it since, but its proximity to the store will outweigh a multitude of faults. Our rent is $90 this year. I have concluded, if I keep on in this little box, to manage without a clerk this summer and economize a little (a queer word from this source, say you), or rather wait the movement of the waters somewhat. I tried to get the lease of the store after this one was out, but could n't short of $500.

"I might go on for a whole quire of paper, but it would be no more interesting. Write often. My love to all."

BANGOR, *July* 14, 1844

MY course at present is quite undetermined; either curtail or branch out. I know not which; one month will determine. I have got along since the first of May without help, done my

whole business and have found myself more content and my customers better satisfied, profits more and expenses less; it has led me to considerable satisfaction. Now I want you to give me some of your good advice, and write often.

BANGOR, *Sept.* 8, 1844

WITHIN the last two months there has been considerable change going on in my arrangements, and though you may have heard of some part of the operations, you are not apprised of the whole. In the first place, I have formed a co-partnership with Mr. I. S. Bumpkins. He is a man of substance and perseverance, and we calculate to split the difference between my disposition and his, and conclude we shall make a pretty strong team. I have also offered the firm's papers to my creditors at 62% on what I have, so you see I am a failed man as you predicted. My creditors seem favorable toward me and I believe all will pass off well. We have managed to get Gilligan out of the corner, and shall next week take down the partition wall. This has always been the height of my ambition. It is the greatest stand in the state, and probably the highest rent. We are going into the manu-

facture of specialties—the tallest kind—and shall procure the most of our stock by way of barter, so that we can move along without the usual difficulties attending insufficient capital. The prospect is better with me now than ever before. On all occasions of my former attempts in business I started with a faint-heartedness which I do not see reason to feel now. I have always said before that I was starting on a voyage of great risk and uncertainty from want of foundation and experience.

Only disappointment and failure resulted from the partnership with Mr. Bumpkins, and after this bitter experience Eliphalet returned to Boston to act as salesman for his brother a third time. But now the field of work was changed.

Aaron, being in the jewelry business, had been obliged, as were all his trade, to get his jewelry boxes from over the sea. His love of nicely made goods disgusted him with the imported boxes, which were not only crudely constructed, but became badly broken and soiled in transit. His watch-making experience had developed in him the independent habit of making for himself whatever he felt

the need of, so it was natural that he should decide to attempt the manufacture of good boxes.

In 1843, therefore, he set out from Boston to Portland with a package of pasteboard and glazed and enamelled papers, which he had secured from David Felt of New York,—at that time the only manufacturer of such material in this country,—and for which he had paid $7.50. Aaron made the trip by stage and packet steamer, and fifteen miles of the distance had to be covered by foot; but walking was always sport to him and he was not tired when he laid his parcel and his plan before his father. The plan was that Colonel Dennison should begin to supply the United States with boxes for jewelry. The colonel felt his fighting blood rise at the thought of competing with industries on the other side of the water, and undertook the work at once. The old shoe-knife and a straight edge were the only tools needed in cutting out the parts, which were put together, pasted, and finished by two daughters, Julia and Mathilda, who became thus the first jewelry box makers in this country; the latter developed great skill and was closely associated with the business all her life. The first lot of boxes soon reached

Cobblers' Bench
on which the first Box Forms were cut

Boston, and Aaron took them around to the makers and sellers of jewelry for judgment. It was an anxious time for the young man, but the strain was soon over. The American boxes proved to be so much better made and finished than the foreign ones that they found a market at once. The anxiety was then transferred to the question of sufficient supply, but father and son put their heads together and worked out the first paper-box machine, which was promptly set to work. It is still the standard machine of its kind in all box factories. Before the first year was over, ten hands were employed and new machinery and various devices had been added. So began the Dennison Manufacturing Company.

II

AARON'S heart was not in the making of boxes, nor was he fitted by nature to develop and maintain such a business. His eyes were turned towards the vision of a watch made by machinery,—a watch better, cheaper, and more easily repaired than any the world had known. He looked for a Moses to lead the less technical enterprise into the Promised Land of Success; a man with the qualities of salesmanship was needed and, like Aaron of old, he could plead that he had not a facile tongue. Eliphalet had just returned from his unsuccessful Bangor venture, well convinced that he could never give the best that was in him to the management of a jewelry store, so to him was turned over the responsibility for the sale of the boxes. With the beginnings of that enthusiasm which steadily grew more intense during later years, he saw the possibilities of the new business, and threw himself into it heart and soul. The opportunity was obvious, for a very considerable demand for American boxes had been awakened, but difficulties serious enough to test his faith began at once to arise. Paper and cardboard of good enough texture to

fulfil the very strict requirements were hard to come by and not a little had to be imported; and other men, now that the way had been blazed, plunged eagerly into this new kind of enterprise, making prices based on their ignorance or eagerness, and boxes to match.

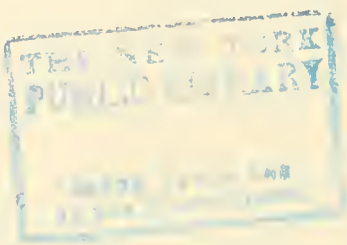
Until 1849 Eliphalet acted merely as salesman, but then made an agreement with his father for a division of profits, by which he became virtually a middleman. The business, however, was an exacting one, easily disturbed by the delays arising from the inaccessibility of Brunswick, and so seriously hampered by the division of authority that in the next year plans were made which ended in Eliphalet's purchase of his father's interest. That this purchase was not as easy and simple a matter as the word would indicate is made clear by the letters of 1850, which frequently refer to bank credits and notes "shaved" to meet others due. But they tell, also, of his establishing a market in New York, which was so promising as to make him decide to visit that city once each month, and in October he cheerfully reports that "he has been through his account of stock and is gratified to think that for one year he has paid for his fodder and gathered a little moss."

So, in his thirty-first year, this little manufacturing business passed wholly into his own hands, and from then he may be said to have struck the trail which he followed the rest of his life. He could not see whither it led, and could never believe that a more than normal degree of success would come to him; but the new enterprise opened to him the broader life of the traveller, bringing to him daily new acquaintances in the business world, and thus allowed the free and effective play of one of his greatest talents,—the power of attracting and influencing men. The goods he dealt in were small, but his thorough devotion to them, and his ingenuity in finding and filling new wants, soon made his line indispensable.

In 1851 Mr. Dennison's attention was attracted to the little cards on which jewelry was displayed, and which the shop boys and clerks cut out with scissors. He saw how necessary this card was to the jewelry business, and how impossible it would become, with the growth of the country, to supply the demand properly by this primitive method. The product was crude and irregular, and he therefore set himself to the problem of making these cards by machinery. The necessary Bristol-board he had at first to import, but as

E. W. Dennison

1854



the business grew he looked about to see whether it could not be made in this country. To his surprise, he found almost under his eyes as good material as the European article, at the E. Lamson Perkins factory in Roxbury, the first in the United States where Bristol-board had been successfully made. The alliance between the two, which was made at once, continued until the Perkins factory became the nucleus of the large Dennison works, established in Roxbury in 1878. The machine and dies for cutting, Mr. Dennison worked out himself; and so clear was his insight into fundamentals that the principle of card-making which he established remains today the best.

In 1850 it became necessary to find a convenient headquarters. Only a very small rent could be considered, and he was therefore fortunate in finding a jewelry manufacturer from Attleboro', Mr. H. M. Richards, on a similar quest. Together they took a second-story room at 203 Washington Street, on the corner of Bromfield, where the jewelry was displayed in the front, and the card and tag cutter occupied the rear. Mr. Richards' salesman, Albert Metcalf, was a few years younger than Mr. Dennison and soon became his close

friend. Before long he was helping in his spare moments by selling boxes to callers and entering the sale on the "Scratch Book," and within a few years they had formed a partnership which only death dissolved. The new firm was established in 1855 and assumed the name of Dennison & Co. Mr. Metcalf to this day takes keen pleasure in the recollection of their early struggles, and especially in recalling the warnings given him even as late as 1860 by the old accountant who came in to write up and post their books, "to look out for Dennison, as he was no business man."

In the thirty-one years of their work together, Mr. Dennison's abounding enthusiasm was well supplemented by Mr. Metcalf's command of detail and clear understanding of business conditions. For him no hours were too long, no labor too tedious, no financial problem too complex. It was he who first investigated the subject of foreign tissue, crepe, and napkins; and the present close relation between the house of Cooper, Dennison & Walkden in London and the Dennison Manufacturing Company in America is the result of Mr. Metcalf's search for a reliable supply of parchment.

Jeweler's cotton was almost as indispensa-

Boston Store

1856

ble to the trade as boxes and cards. Up to 1854 this had been imported from Europe, but from that date on Mr. Dennison added it to the list of his manufactures.

These two new ventures, cards and cotton, were hardly more than begun when Mr. Dennison decided that what he had accomplished towards improving the cards could also be applied to the jewelry tags which were then imported from Europe. Their inferior quality had discredited them among American merchants, so with a good American Bristol-board at his hand and dies and cutters already developed, he had only to obtain a satisfactory twine. For the stringing, which demanded careful and skilful workmanship, he relied upon his sister Mathilda, who in 1855 married George Swift of Falmouth, Massachusetts. In her usual businesslike way she soon had several of the farmers' wives well trained to the work, and so securely grounded the principles of care which her brother demanded that for more than fifty years the household industry thus started has remained in Falmouth.

But Mr. Dennison's eyes were still open to opportunity. Having the twine on hand brought naturally to his attention another need of the

jeweler, and within a few months his stock included a twine in balls which today bears the initials "EWD" as its trade name. Shortly afterwards the fact that the little marking-tags could be of value to others besides the jewelers he had so far dealt with came to his notice. New sizes and shapes were therefore brought out, meeting such various needs that even the name they soon earned—"merchandise tags"—was hardly broad enough. It was a most significant step, this widening of interest beyond the jeweler, since it brought him into contact with many trades, and soon introduced his goods to the stationer.

The success of the merchandise tag, when well made and of good material, led up to the conception of a larger and stronger kind for heavier and more bulky goods. Here, however, more serious handicaps had to be overcome. Such tags could be cut by the user from waste cardboard, and those were the days when time was more abundant than material, and when all paper, pasteboard, string, and the like were carefully saved. To spend money upon machine-made tags, when the shop boys could clip them out of stuff lying about the premises, and even the clerks could be set to work on them on rainy days, seemed too im-

possible an extravagance to be considered. To realize how conditions have changed, we need only recall a recent story to the effect that, in competition among boys for the position of parcel makers in one of our largest establishments, those who carefully wound up the old strings and folded the used papers, as they had been taught to do by their thrifty mothers, were promptly rejected as too slow and stupid, while the untrained gamins, who ignored the foolish saving, were accepted.

It was the day of small economies. Mr. Metcalf has given a realistic picture of the young manufacturer's life at that time. "The lunch hour was at twelve o'clock, and the place for obtaining the meal was at Shaw's lunch-room, just around the corner in Bromfield Street. Fifteen to twenty minutes was the time occupied in absorbing a ten-cent plate of beans and a five-cent pie, after which Mr. Dennison would take his place again at the machine he had invented and proceed to cut out jewelers' tags. The machine worked by a treadle and stamped out the tags one by one. A girl, who sat in front of the machine, picked up the tags and bound them in bundles of a hundred each."

The new large tags could not be sold at

first, and their maker had to give them away to get them into use at all. In time, however, the fresh appearance, fair shape, and uniform size made the goods to which they were fastened look so much more attractive than the haphazard home-made tags had done that the new idea began to commend itself to enterprising merchants, and these tags gradually came into use in the woollen trade.

Tags for the still heavier work of marking parcels for shipment—"direction labels," as they were called in England—were made of linen with folded ends, and imported in small quantities. But the rise of the premium on gold made linen too costly to use for such a purpose, and a paper tag with a metal eyelet took its place. This eyelet, however, tore out too readily, especially when the tag became wet, and progress along these lines was much impeded by that great inconvenience. An eyelet alone, however well attached to a box or parcel, was clearly of very limited utility. The tag business evidently had its limits not far ahead.

It was at this juncture that Mr. Dennison hit upon a device which saved the day and put the business practically into his hands. He reinforced the hole in the tag by a paper washer

on each side. It was apparently an insignificant addition, but it made the shipping tag what it has been ever since. It furnished a strong and a permanent means of attachment, and was patented in 1863.

It was this invention which so broadened and strengthened the foundation of his business that the great development which it afterward gained was always firmly supported. As the reward of his insight into the needs of others, and of his ingenuity and promptness in devising sound means to satisfy those needs, the victory was deserved, and fairly won; but it came in the form of new opportunity to labor, rather than as a relief from it. To hold his advantage and to win its full value occupied nearly all the rest of his life,—a life of planning and struggle, but of a broad love of man, and of deep joy in his work, his friends, and his family.

As Mr. Edward Atkinson has said in his tribute to his friend: "Mr. Dennison was one of the great representatives of manufacturers of conveniences, of whom it can be said that every dollar of his earnings was a token of the service which he had rendered to the community, because, for every dollar that he made, the community saved ten or

more which it had previously been obliged to expend; and that is the ethical principle by which commerce is governed under the true rendering of the Golden Rule."

III

WHEN the patent was granted for his shipping tag, Mr. Dennison was in his forty-third year. Twenty years of married life had been to him a source of inspiration, encouragement, and deepest happiness. He delighted in taking the most tender care of his wife and in teaching his children the joy of serving and helping her. The consideration which he lavished upon her developed the gentler side of his nature, and their home was made beautiful by his continual thoughtfulness and provision for her comfort. On her side, moreover, she brought to him a keen good sense and a rare quiet humor which lifted him above the cares of the market and cheered him in times of stress and defeat. A continual banter played between them. The state of his clothing was a perpetual source of despair on her part and of excuse on his. "Never mind the spoggles on my coat, mother," he would say, "so long as there are none on my character."

He wrote to his youngest daughter: "Your best of mothers was at home to-night and looked so bright and well that it seems to me that for the love I bear her I should start

right off for the 'Dobsis' again. I know that I am an awful care for her, to keep me decent; but I do think that if she had Senator —— to keep clean, she would find me a pink of neatness in comparison, for I met him on my way out from fishing and he looked so spotted that I asked the conductor if he had n't a string of hose somewhere on the train, so that he could play on the Senator for a half hour or so."

Six children were born to them, of whom five are still living,—two sons and three daughters,—a family closely bound together around a beautiful mother and the memory of a manly father. His big heart found room for each new baby, while it was still widening daily to the circle of friends which grew even faster than his business. But towards his own wife and children, to his devotion he added a great tenderness, the indulgence of which seemed to give him the greatest pleasure of his life. When he could afford some new plan for their comfort a tone of deep satisfaction rings out in his letters.

"We are all well at our house. As spring house-cleaning approaches the wheels squeak a little, and we propose to grease them with one good domestic if we can find her."

Lydia A. Dennison.

1901

"The whole boodle of us are off to Hull tomorrow, where we have taken a cottage for the season, and take meals at the hotel near by. Lydia was wearing out in the old shebang. She is always well when off."

* * *

"Still our good dutiful mother, having no cares of her own, manages to lie awake thinking of her duties undone to others, and so enjoys her usual share of martyrdom,—while my beastly health lets me sleep as quiet as a log."

* * *

"Lydia has a large fine bay mare and two carriages, one for shopping and calling and the other for driving out to Newton or for rides. Her turnout is just what seems in keeping with style, *i.e.*, nice-looking without any slopover,—not even a hogshead on the panel. The driver wears a derby and clothes cut like other folks. I love to have her indulge in such real comforts at her age, and I don't believe anybody that knows her envies her the comfort she takes and is able to give to others."

To his children he was a sympathetic and in-

dulgent father, thoroughly understanding the phases of their childhood and frequently subordinating his own plans to their wishes. To give a fuller view of this side of his life several of his home letters are quoted in full.

Boston, *Aug.* 4, 1879

My dear Aaron:

Though our berths have been engaged for more than two weeks, I have not been sure that I could get off and have delayed writing until the matter was surely fixed. This is now fixed in this way, *i.e.*, the disappointment to Jewell and Lou and a young friend of Lou's would be too much to bear, so we old folks must go willy-nilly.

Boston, *May 1st*, '81

My Darlings in England:

This is as bright and beautiful a May morning as ever was given us, and but for it's being Sunday morning the streets would be filled with the Maying parties. I took an early start this morning so as to get out to Newtonville to dinner, this time in season, for I have always kept them waiting. Have ordered the colt to be at the store at 12.30, and shall write until then. I feel that I could gossip all day easily

enough. You have no notion of the pleasure your letters give me, for I am full of courage now that the object of the trip is to be thoroughly tried. Folks at the house are full of inquiries and seem delighted that you are coming so soon. They all ask if I am not lonesome, but I have to say as a rule "no," but exceptions "yes." You know it is pretty hard to be lonesome where Ella, Jule, and Lewis are. Besides I am in demand for whist every night either at the club or at the house. Then the business calls are enough for the rest of the time; but when the day is over and bedtime comes, and in the opening of the day, your absence comes over me and I miss my cheerful baby's welcome and my boy in the store. But all of this has a silver lining in the new-born hope that this cross is to bring good fruits, and that the good news that I am now getting is the harbinger of a new life to us all. We are all getting along splendidly at the Norfolk House, and as for myself I continue in the same vein of good health, spirits, and courage in the future outlook that began with me a week from tomorrow morning. I seem to be entirely free from the effects of the nicotine that has troubled me so long, and surprised myself by walking so rapidly down Dudley

to Washington Street that the calves of my legs ached, but no chest trouble.

Boston, *Sept.* 14, '75

Well, my dear boy, it is just as we all anticipated. You are real homesick, and as many years as it is since I had this disease I can remember just as easily what my feelings were as though it were but yesterday. I know that when I was real homesick it was no use for anybody to talk to me or try to convince me that I could ever become reconciled to my lot as it then was. I had left a pleasant home, a father that was good to me, and one of the kindest mothers that ever anybody had; but they were poor and I had to set out for myself, and but for my pride, I was so homesick that I would have walked all the way home barefooted, one hundred and fifty miles, and would have been contented to work as a common laborer and live on brown-bread crust and water, if I could only have lived in Brunswick. Nor could anything convince me that I should ever get over this feeling, or that I should ever be contented to live anywhere else except in Brunswick. This was a great many years ago, as many as forty, but there

Boston Sept 14 th 75

Our Darling Charlie -

I han recievd two most excellent letters from you. The first I asked the folks at home to answer but the one recieved this morning I will try to answer myself -

Well, my dear boy. it is just as we all anticipated. You are real homesick, and as many years as it is since I had this disease I can remember just as easy what my feelings were as though but yesterday. I know that when real homesick it was

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good to me. and one of the kindest mothers that ever anybody
had. but they were poor, and I had to put out for myself,
and but for my pride. I was so homesick that I would have
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would been contented to work as a common laborer
and lived on Brown Bread Crust a water, if I could
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ever be contented to live anywhere else. than in Brunswick

is nothing more fresh in my mind than my dreadful homesickness. Others may laugh at you when this disease is upon you, but your old father never will. You are just about the age that I was at that time. You have a father that wants to be good to you, and surely you have as good a mother as ever any boy was blest with. You know that they are only too anxious to do the best for you that they can in the short time that you are not dependent upon your own exertions. By and by you will want to branch off into some occupation for life."

* * *

"If you look at it right, and only determine to make the best of it, you will see that what seems hard for you to bear now is that which will enable you to most quickly develop your manhood, and make you an equal with your companions.

"Bear in mind, my dear boy, that you have not a great deal more time to prepare yourself to live amongst men and women as you should be able to, and if you will only pluck up and do your very best, you will be so much happier for it; and oh, my boy, you cannot conceive how happy this would make

us all, and none so happy as the dearest of mothers, who has done so much, suffered so much, and is ready to suffer so much more for you.

"I wish that I had been better educated myself so that I should know how to write you, and appeal to your best nature, and thus influence you to your best good.

"You must consider that the institution that you are at has educated hundreds of young men, who, if they had a comfortable home and affection for their father, mother and sisters, were homesick to a greater or less degree until they became in some way reconciled to the great change.

"Everything is strange to you now,—the place, the living, the teachers, and most of the scholars. But if you will only be brave, and show to your teachers that you can be brave, and to your companions that you can be brave, they will all learn to respect you, and you will respect yourself, which is all the better, and will help you more than you can think. We all knew you would be very, very homesick at first, and we think all the more of you for it. The boy who would not be homesick is poor indeed, for it must be with such a boy that he either has no home

to be sick for, or else that he has nobody there to love.

"It is only three weeks from tomorrow before we may all expect to meet together, and though the time seems long to you now, if you will only resolve in the time between now and then to perform every duty as cheerfully as possible, you don't know how it will help the time off."

* * *

"Be brave, my dear boy, and you will make your old mother and father very happy."

* * *

"There is nothing that you can do that will make the time pass off so quickly as to work steadily at your tasks, and there is nothing that you will thank us for more in after life than for this opportunity that you now have to fit yourself for true manhood."

* * *

"She feels as badly for the necessity of your absence from us as a mother can feel, but when she sees that in this you are best fitting yourself for manhood, and insuring your own good, and the good of those who in your

future life will be your dependents, she rejoices to think that sweetness is to come from the bitterness of the present separation."

To the young men associated with him in business he gave the same fatherly affection; they were always to him "his boys" and his interest in their home lives never flagged. No important event came to them without calling forth from him a hearty letter of congratulation or sympathy, so full of understanding and inspiration that it was remembered and treasured throughout their lives. The business itself he called "Aaron's baby," and his big nature loved and tended it as he would love a child, lending to it a part of his own humanity. "This baby is yours and you are entitled to a share in the profits of its manhood," he writes. And again: "I shall never lose sight of the fact that you planted the seed, and that you planted it in better soil than you, or I, or anybody else ever dreamed of. Since the beginning I have been happier when attending to this offspring of yours than anywhere else."

His intense family loyalty increased as the years went by. With all the laborious correspondence which his work must have demanded in those ante-typewriter days, he

wrote long letters frequently to Aaron, and often in them showed the strength of his desire to do everything in his power to help his father and sisters. His bitterest struggles to see the right course arose when his love of his work and his love of family came into conflict, and no plan opened itself to him by which he could serve both at once. To Mathilda's project for making wood mailing-boxes he gave a prominent place even up to the end of his life, though frequently expressing to Aaron his doubts of its practicability; and a nephew who had entered his employ without a natural aptitude for manufacturing he held to for many years, letting him go finally with great sorrow. But at whatever cost, he must make the business worthy the name Dennison,—square and efficient in what it undertook to do. "My hope is that the standing of this House will never lower to the ordinary trickery of trade, and that the faithful helpers to this result will never see cause to regret that they have cast their lot with us."

His admiration for the sterling Dennison qualities shows in the following.

"For the last four years the Cape branch of the D's have gathered at the old homestead, now occupied by David, as true a one

of the D stripe as you will find,—a carpenter and a good one." Of his brothers and sisters he made frequent mention in his later letters, always in homely, comfortable tone, as: "Brother B. G. popped in on my game of solitaire at about half past ten last night. He is up purchasing his holiday stock. He looks as spruce as can be and sends love for himself and others." And: "I found Benny in his new store near corner of Auburn Street, or on the site of the old yellow top roof house. It is the best store in town, and he has bought it. He and Lithgow run it and are doing a nice business."

To Aaron he yielded complete devotion. Throughout their lives they were closely intimate, each helping the other as occasion arose, and while Eliphalet attained the greater financial success, he never failed to acknowledge his debt to Aaron's genius.

Aaron, in the repairing of watches, then largely English and Swiss hand-made movements, had become conscious of the great number of defects that existed even in the best of them, though made by men trained from generation to generation in the art. He drew the logical conclusion that, if watches were to be improved, only making them by ma-

chinery could accomplish it; but this involved making each of the parts on a separate machine and assembling them, which meant that similar parts of any two watches must be interchangeable. In this idea of interchangeable parts Aaron only saw an added advantage to come to the repairer, although the rest of his trade regarded it as an insurmountable difficulty. So he proved that watches made with interchangeable parts would run, by clamping together six forms of brass and thus cutting out the parts in gangs of six, and immediately turned his mind to the development of watch-making machines. With Edward Howard, a clock manufacturer, as partner, and financed by Samuel Curtis, he finally completed a factory in Roxbury in 1851, which was in 1854 moved to Waltham. But Aaron's whole mind was devoted to the mechanical side of the business and was utterly unprepared for the panic of 1857, which forced him to sell. The purchasers later incorporated as the American Waltham Watch Company which today stands at the head of the business, gladly admitting its debt to the Father of American Watch-making. From this time on Mr. A. L. Dennison gave himself up to the invention of one plan after another for greater economies in va-

rious branches of his trade, but either because of his lack of interest in financial matters, or from what his brother loyally called "his entire abnegation of the common selfishness of mankind," others reaped the harvests he had sown, until his son, who had just the ability his father needed, wisely served his interests and established a watch-case factory in Birmingham, England, which is today a successful Dennison company.

Aaron's career is well summarized in a letter to him from his younger brother in January, 1874.

Boston, *January* 14, '74

While a crowning financial success on your part would be scarcely less gratifying to me than to you, yet I do not place the importance in it that you do.

All aside from financial success, yours has been one of millions, as a career of usefulness.

Aside from the Bigelows (Carpet-Makers), there is in my opinion no living man who has leaped so directly into a great career of usefulness to his fellowmen as you have.

I tell you the ball that you set in motion will roll through the later nations, and the

American system of watch-making will be the only system before Frank is as old as his father. Already our tool-makers are busy furnishing your old slow movers with the means to compete with us, and just as soon as the right party gets hold of the way to work them, all of the English makers must follow, then the French, then the Swiss. These systematic sizes make the case as much the interchangeable principle as any other part of the watch. Some time this great enterprise will be honestly written up, and the original author of it will be promptly acknowledged, and his biography properly written; all encyclopedias hereafter, or in time, will have the name and principal events of his life.

It was always a matter very close to Eliphalet's heart that due recognition should be given to Aaron for his inventions. In many letters he attempted to overcome his brother's diffidence.

"You look upon it as folly to have your cast taken, but I am serious and must request that it be done, and also a full-length photo of at least cabinet size. I feel that I am indebted to your genius for what I have accomplished, and that the world is indebted to you (or at least this country) for the invention and ini-

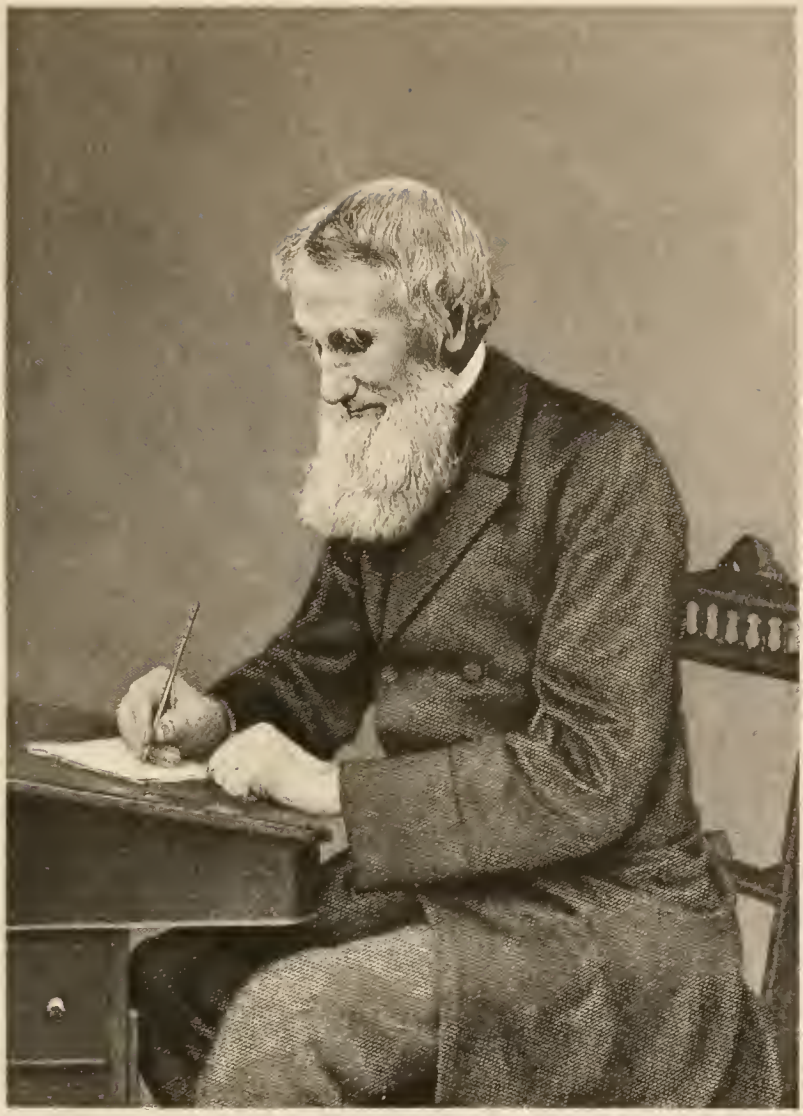
tiation of one of its industries, already feeding thousands of mouths, and soon to be one of the foremost industries of the country."

* * *

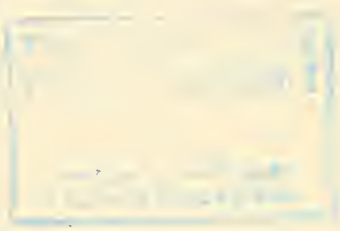
"I hope you will be able another year to come home and make a triumphal sailing through our great watch factories, for it would be an occasion to all to have a visit from the live projector of this great industry. Years hence the operatives of today will be telling their grandchildren that they saw and shook hands with the great inventor of the American system of watch-making with as much pride as father used to tell of his visit to Portland to see Lafayette. No taffy,—all true,—and should be carried out."

* * *

"Waltham has become quite excited over the event of the return of the 'Father of the American System of Watch-making' to the scenes of his triumphs after so many years in solitary exile. There is talk of giving you a royal reception, so you must get your claw hammer and have your hair cut; also get your speech, or else call upon me to respond for you, as it will come easy to me."



A. G. Dennison



"Your brow is crowned with laurels of success as a great inventor, as a man of indomitable courage, push, and industry, and of incorruptible integrity; one who has sacrificed his life to the science that he was early wedded to,—sacrificed home, country, and all that selfish men surround themselves with, called comforts, for your love of that science, and your love of mankind."

Mr. A. L. Dennison was a man of most attractive and interesting personality. He was tall and slender, with a full beard except that the upper lip was shaven. His face wore a severe expression, but his smile was very sweet. Meeting him for the first time, one would not suspect the persistence and patience that had carried him so far and so long against overwhelming difficulties. It was easy to see that he was a dreamer, but not so easy to see that he had the courage of his dreams.

In every way a simple man, he loved plain and comfortable ways of living and had no taste for luxury. He was particular about his own dress, that it should be neat and suitable, and had an especial liking, in his own case and others, for a good hat. He was a vegetarian, though, as he said, not a bigoted one; and

sometimes, when appetite was keen and a chicken was on the table, he would share in it, with the remark that "as the bird was dead it was of no use to try to save him from slaughter." He was a Swedenborgian in religion, that serene faith well suiting his temperament.

It was this working dreamer, this true idealist, to whom E. W. Dennison was devoted as to no other man, and with whom he alternately counselled, pleaded, and struggled in a long series of letters which afford most valuable glimpses of the characters of both men.

IV

IF the home lives of thousands of men were wholly known, there would undoubtedly appear many pictures of husbands and fathers, loving, tender, considerate, appreciative,—each according to the bigness of his heart. It is because Mr. Dennison also carried these same qualities into his business that he stands more nearly alone. Men bought from him frequently because they loved him, and he gave them the best possible service because he loved them; men worked their fingers raw gladly for him, and he paid them all he rightly could in money and all they could ask in affection. Yet above everything he loved the business itself, not only devoting his life to it, but many times turning back the earnings so that it might have wider development in capital and facilities. His organization attained the true and right medium between unbusiness-like charity and cold-blooded "business;" and the spirit he gave it lives to-day,—a score of years after his death.

The only way to gain an adequate idea of Mr. Dennison's love of his work is from his letters, but it will be wise first to sketch ra-

ther briefly the history of the business from 1863 up to the present.

It has already been said that the patenting of the shipping-tag afforded no resting-place; first Mr. Dennison had to work out the correct mechanical principles upon which the tag machines should be constructed, leaving the details to Mr. Charles Sawyer, superintendent of the Perkins factory, and Mr. Charles Moore, of Moore & Wyman. Again here it must be said that so fundamentally sound were those principles that the constant study and experience of forty-five years have brought to light no flaw in them; yet Mr. Dennison had never received any education in mechanics,—he could, as he said, "*see* the machine plain enough, but could not *draw* a wheelbarrow." But paper stock presented an equal problem, since it could not then be made heavier than seventy pounds to the ream, and the qualities of surface and strength were far from Mr. Dennison's ideal. Study and coöperation with Lyman Hollingsworth, a paper manufacturer, produced a sixty-pound paper of pure manila rope fibre, of which two thicknesses—smooth sides out—were pasted together in the Perkins factory. Ten million tags were sold in the first year, and their

value over the rough clippings of waste paper was established.

But this only awakened others to the opportunities in the tag business, and vigorous underselling by Victor Mauger, with his metal eyeletted tag, offered a new problem. Mauger was agent for William Blake of Liverpool, and carried full lines of stationers' goods, including sealing-wax. When Mr. Dennison finally bought him out he added wax to his own stock of goods and also came into touch with English manufacturers in his own lines. He had to purchase several more firms—Lindsay & Stevenson and Snell & Co. among them—before he learned that the ambition of most of the men who started in the tag business, and their greatest gain, lay in selling out their plants to him. He therefore early formed the policy of independence of any sort of alliance, choosing rather to centre all his attention upon production of the best goods; and this sound principle has been strictly adhered to up to the present day.

Meantime in addition to the Boston, New York and Philadelphia stores, the Chicago branch had been opened in 1868, only to be forced to new quarters by the fire in 1871; and, too soon afterwards for complete recov-

ery, in 1872 came the heavy blow of the Boston fire. But there seemed to be no halting, and stores in St. Louis and Cincinnati were soon established. Room had been provided at the Perkins factory in Roxbury for the new tag machines as they were needed, the card and merchandise tag work being carried on in Boston on Milk Street, while boxes were still made in Brunswick. In 1878 the whole business was incorporated under the name Dennison Manufacturing Company, and it soon became necessary to purchase the entire Roxbury plant, and afterwards to move the card-making there also. This centralizing principle was carried on steadily, but was not made complete until long after Mr. Dennison's death, when the Roxbury factory had been entirely outgrown, and all branches of manufacture were brought together at South Framingham.

Parallel to all this opening up of new territory constant additions were made to the "line;" shipping cards, gummed labels, powder papers, absorbent cotton, restaurant checks, game counters, and English non-tarnishing tissue paper, and many other new articles, were introduced before 1876. Each grew naturally out of what had come before, or was

developed to fill real needs which Mr. Dennison's thoughtfulness discovered; each brought its own problems, mechanical and commercial; and because skilfully conceived and handled, each brought also added profit and prestige.

Even a rapid expansion in territory, plant, and goods, however, did not distract Mr. Dennison's attention from the all-important development of his younger co-workers. Looking far ahead into the future, planning for permanency beyond his span, understanding "his boys" thoroughly, and inspiring them always, he found men when he needed them ready trained to take the responsibility of details he had to give up. His own disinterested service called forth in his employees a loyalty which gave the term "family" when applied to them a very deep meaning. In his presence men learned that only in loyal service to a worthy cause is continued happiness found.

One foremost article of Mr. Dennison's business creed will need no emphasis after his letters have been read. The chief reason for first undertaking the manufacture of boxes was because the quality of the imported goods could be greatly improved; and each new device afterwards offered some improvement in quality over what it displaced. *Quality*, there-

fore, was at the beginning of his work; the ideal of quality accompanied every step of his progress and extended to the goods, the machines, the methods, and the men.

In choosing extracts from his many letters to Aaron relating to his work, no attempt is made to have them offer a complete picture of his business or his business character; but each helps to a clearer conception of his policy, and therefore it is wiser to risk quoting too many rather than too few.

Jan. 31, '74

As for myself I am in no situation to aid, as I am pinching all concerned, with the view of liquidation of our debt in consequence of the loss by fire and new fittings. We are rapidly approaching daylight, and hope before another year to be back into our normal condition. I am so intent now upon liquidation that I have stopped many contemplated improvements that we need to facilitate our business.

All of the firm but Henry felt able to keep a horse, and I two, but all these little luxuries are now cut off by sale. I hope in future to give you accommodation if bad fortune still pursues you.

E. W. DENNISON

May 12, 1875

We have just fixed upon our new quarters. Have taken three chambers 40 × 100 on the corner of Milk and Hawley streets, which location may be fairly called the centre of our trade. We have added little specialties to our business from time to time, so that now we receive a little toll from about all classes of trade and professions.

Leases now being made are not half what they were a year or more ago. We pay $6000 per annum for our new premises,—the owner expected $10,000 a year ago,—and we are the first to make a square offer for the chambers. I look upon it as a pretty bold move in these times, but we naturally expect to pick up a little running in net trade that pays well.

As for myself I am working quite hard to get our business into form to pass to the good helpers that we have, as an inheritance. I am planning to incorporate it, and hope to have Perkins conjoin his business with ours in this same body. Our interests are identical. The two plants combined would make a power that would be impregnable and represent a large corporation. The three principal points to be gained would be strength in unity, the care for our help, and the settlement of our affairs

and individual interests ante and post mortem. Our principal helpers would become stockholders, their stock to be paid for in the profits of the business. Excuse the time I have taken on this matter of business, but the subject is uppermost in my mind and I thought might interest you.

June, 1875

I TELL my friends that I first tried to have the Old South for a tag shop, and next a part of the Post Office, but not succeeding we contented ourselves with a spot between. The fact is, there is hardly a trade or profession that we do not take tribute from to a greater or less degree. The jewelers, their boxes, cards, cotton, tissue papers, chamois skins, sealing wax, etc. The druggists, their boxes and powder papers. Almost every business with their tags and gum labels. The legal fraternity, with their seals, and of late we have had sermons to eyelet.

July, 1875

OUR business is suffering with the rest. The last year is the first since I started the business that it has not shown an agreeable increase, but this year will show a falling off

of at least 10 per cent, and this month of June over 20 per cent from the June, '74. Besides this in these times there is a general look for depression of prices, and we are called upon to lower all prices even more than the difference in cost. Besides this we have a constant petty competition springing up that is changing like a kaleidoscope. There have been more than fifty attempts to get a foothold in the tag business, and there are now scattered through the country about the usual number of ten or twelve small makers going for the consumers' trade.

Apl. 11, '76

We are warned by the excessive shrinkage from the excessive war prices that we must shrink with the rest until the expenses of living are reduced to something commensurate with the shrinkage of margins. House rents and store rents have been nearly fourfold ante-war prices; consequently all means of living are largely increased. Beefsteak 33¢ per pound. Salaries must go with it, and capacity of $1000 before the war is now from two to three thousand dollars. Nor can we cut down our old and faithful helpers until those staples of living come down.

Dec. 16, '76

How long it is since my last to or from you I am at loss to say, for this last year has been the busy one of my life, through the whole of which I have been about one month behind time.

My whole effort is bent upon getting our good ship with so much sea room that some younger and less experienced head can run the craft without danger from breakers or lee shore.

As a natural consequence of our wide-spread business and great notoriety, and the gradual decline of all interests back to their normal condition, after such an unhealthy expansion during and after the great war, we are having small competition spring up in all of our various lines of trade that require a watchful care on our part to keep them each and all from growing into formidable antagonists. This we have succeeded so far in doing quite satisfactorily.

When we first became Mauger's agents, his sales were about five million tags. Now I estimate the whole trade 80,000,000 per an., and of this we make 60,000,000. I have plans now that we think will give us about 15,000,000 more the next year.

In the Mdse. Tag trade there have been about ten contestants or perhaps fifteen; there are remaining three, all of which sell poor and cheap trash at about half the price of our standard goods. The trade in these goods is about the same except perhaps 15,000,000, to all others and 65,000,000 to us. In the foregoing I have given you the outside aspect of our business, but the changes inside are greater than the outside.

Foreseeing the natural drift of margins to be toward hardpan as the business grew in volume and the general decline was in progress, I grasped the idea of growing our business to meet this decline in profits by adding and systematizing little specialties,—all of which came as easy and natural as it did to cut up, pack, and sample the jewelry cards. I will try to name these in course. When I inherited this business it was limited to Jewelry Boxes, then the Jewelry Cards, then the Pink Cotton, Jewelers' Tags, then Merchandise Tags, Jewelers' Twine, Shipping Tags, Shipping Cards, Gum Labels, Powder Papers for Druggists, Dental and Surgical Cotton, Restaurant Checks; and some new babies not yet out of their swaddling-clothes are Dennison's Shaving Papers, Game Counters, etc., etc. Besides

this we have interlarded several little patents which we handle on royalty and otherwise, —such as Phillips' Hook Tags, Stearns' Clasp Tags, Suspension Rings, Rowland's Copying Pad, etc., etc., all of which our local stores in each principal market enable us to handle with great facility. The most of these little specialties are secure in profits and enable us to increase.

I will select Gum Labels as the most notable example of our system of trade. When we commenced this there were three or four makers of these goods located in New York. We placed our prices on them at $12 per gross, while the usual price for the goods on the market was $9, and this price was run down to $5 net before the last one gave out, and we had the exclusive market to ourselves for years. This year a New York party bought the débris of one of the old makers, and is making a few, but we do not feel him.

In fact we have run into so many little specialties that we have in our last circular dubbed ourselves "Manufacturing Stationers" in addition to "Tag Manufacturers."

So far I have given you the rosy hue, and if I stopped here you might think that there was no other color.

All of this variety of goods carries with it an immense detail which, however well systematized, makes work for mind and body. Next, this spreading of business uses up our means freely and faster than the profits, so the perplexities of doing more business than the means are at hand for have their share of our attention. But my worst trouble is to find work for our employees except in the busy season and especially in the jewelry-box line. This fairly racks my brain, and it was in hopes to make an outlet for our surplus that the encouragement I got from the English exhibitors at Philadelphia induced me to send Mr. Peckham to your market.

While the real errand, that of finding a market to keep my help together, was a failure, still the eventual result from openings in other lines of goods, we have reason to believe, will compensate us for all the outlay, as well as set at rest a problem that has bothered my brain ever since I passed through England. We shall probably sell a great many tags in England, both Mdse. & Shipping, and may sell some boxes.

Of course, a business with so much detail, even with the most reliable help, involves my close attention. I have sometimes thought that

what your baby has grown to, and its probable destiny, would be of interest to you and that when I had a moment's leisure I would give you some idea of it. As it looks to me now we can reach a million dollars trade per annum much easier than we got up to our first $100,000.

Established 1844

DENNISON MANUFACTURING CO.

E. W. DENNISON, Pres. ALBERT METCALF, Treas.

(*Successors to Dennison & Co.*)

TAGS, STATIONERS' SPECIALTIES

JEWELERS' AND DRUGGISTS' FINDINGS, &c.

19 Milk St., Boston, Aug. 24, 1878

This, our new organization, as you will see by the heading, gives me more freedom than I have had for years. Henry is our Superintendent, and as his best relief is in hard work he leaves us—Metcalf & self—little but finance and correspondence.

Dec. 11, '78

While the business community as a rule have complained bitterly of late, we have done a better business this fall than before for years.

Your baby, the jeweler's box, is again without competition, after thirty-four years as we

figure it. There have been many attempts to get a foothold in this trade, but none successful. A concern in Philadelphia pushed us hard for twelve years, but last year burst up, sticking their friends fearfully.

Good goods, square dealing, and promptness have enabled us to monopolize this business longer than there is any example of.

Mar. 19, 1879

We have accomplished our wish to completely consolidate Perkins' factory with our facilities by an outright purchase of his plant.

Mr. P. has finally agreed to sell, papers to be exchanged the first of April. Thus we come into possession of the best card factory in the world, and as for the manufacture of tags we can beat all creation. Our lay with Perkins has not only been a discrimination against us in this country, but an obstacle to our export; but, having laid a good foundation, it will be no surprise to us if you see our tags as plenteous in England as they are in this country, where we supply from 5/8 to 3/4 of all that are used with about ten small competitors. Our sales of shipping tags last year were 70,000,000, and we estimate the whole con-

sumption at 100,000,000. Next year we propose to sell 9/10, or 100,000,000, in this country, besides the commencement of an export that will reach as many more in time. Have you ever dropped into our folks, Cooper & Co., Shoe Lane? If not, do so when next in London. You will find them pleasant people.

Dec. 28, 1879

I AM very busy now getting the new plant into operation. The possibilities now seem almost inexhaustible to us in our line.

Word came by dispatch Friday morning that the Dunlap Block was totally destroyed by fire. So the "fire fiend" follows me. I am the principal loser in this case, as I am only insured $10,000 and the building could not be replaced at short of $25,000, *i.e.*, to give us all of the room we had before. The Company was well covered with $25,000. B. G. removed a good deal of stock and probably fully covered. The origin is a mystery. Frank was there till 10.30 Christmas night and wrote his letter, telling the watchman to take it to the train, which he did, and waiting for the down train he was away an hour, to return and find the rear inside mill on fire.

Perkins Factory

1878

Henry has been down and returns with the word "total loss." Frank could not even get his books out. So it comes and goes.

Jan. 4, 1880

We have just closed the biggest business year that we ever had,—not footed yet, but probably about $550,000. I would be curious to know how many millions of pieces it took to make up this amount, but in rough guessing I should say that we made 90 millions of Shipping Tags, 70 millions of Mdse. Tags, 50 millions Gum Labels, and about the same of Powder Papers, and not unlikely 100,000,000 of other promiscuous goods, or between three and four hundred millions of pieces, or over a million and a quarter per day.

We have used up something over two tons of paper per day into small articles. This has got so big now that it would be curious to know something more than guesswork about this, and if I can put somebody on to it I'll do so.

The boom continues and I see no signs of let-up, but I am still on the bear side, believing that we have never touched bottom on this side yet.

The advance in prices is fabulous, and in lots of instances with no reason except that they are full of orders and must advance to keep from being overrun with work. This is especially the case with the paper interest. Wood-pulp paper that we bought at 5¢ per pound has grown up to 6 1/2 cents, and the wood or grinding thereof does not cost a mill more than before, but everybody is busy at the advance.

We are all well, and driving business like sixty.

Apr. 18, '80

You will readily see the importance of our Tag machines being safely secured against loss when I say for the last year we have been unable to keep up with our orders, and notwithstanding a little slacking up, we can't get a working stock ahead. To lose this machinery would be disastrous indeed.

I did not intend to write so much of our business doings, but thought you would be interested in the care we are taking for the future of our business, the seed of which you planted, and now that for the first time I look upon its progress as untrammelled by any outside alliances, I feel that it has become one

of the fixed institutions of this thriving section of the country.

Oct. 19, '80

THE cry that price is all in these goods is no better argument than in any other line of merchandise. It is the hardest work in the biz with me to beat this thoroughly into the heads of too many of my own salesmen with the fact patent to them all that the excellence of our goods is of all the many reasons for our almost monopoly the most powerful.

We are selling thousands of grosses of jewelry boxes at $8.00 per gross in the face of the fact that we make all grades of goods down to $1.00 per gross for the same sizes, and there is not a maker of boxes in the country (there are but two besides ourselves in jewelry) who does not undersell us in all like grades. Yet we are making from 85 to 90 per cent of all the jewelers' goods sold. The same on our tags of which there are eight to ten underselling us, and yet we are selling from 75 to 80 per cent in all our various lines of goods, putting excellence to the front and making trash because we are forced to it.

The last year has been by many thousands the most prosperous of the many years of our

business career. The purchase of the Roxbury factory was a masterly stroke of policy, and has resulted even more favorably than we had any hope that it would. There has not been a day in the past year that we have not had orders in advance of our ability to fill, and at fairly remunerative profits. Last year I hardly had a good night's rest the situation was so perplexing, while this year I have slept the baby sleep every night. The uniting of these two plants puts us beyond all competition. We have nearly completed a wing to the building 80 × 35, three stories, and propose another addition of about the same length as soon as we can get to it, and we shall need it all.

BOSTON, *May* 15, '81

WE put out over $100,000 last year; $60,000 of which went to our new factory and "Absorbent Cotton" mill at Brunswick, and between $40,000 and $50,000 in buildings and machinery at the Perkins factory, and have tens of thousands yet to expend on the latter before we are as complete as we expect to be. As an idea of the wonderful increase in our trade, I will give the last three years: '78, $466,329; '79, $555,231; '80, $742,231.

You will notice the last year was nearly $200,000 growth over '79, and if the increase continues through this year as it has commenced, I have no doubt we shall do $800,000 business this year. If we meet with no disasters the coming year we hope that we may find ourselves a cash dividend concern next year. If so, my good old brother shall have shares enough to come home and live at ease. This baby is yours and you are entitled to a share of the profits in its manhood; so, when beyond the contingency of debts and there is a sure income to come from it, then you can rest. If I could see why this may not be a fact, I would not raise up false hopes, but I do not see but what such a state may come speedily about.

BOSTON, *Dec.* 4, '81

OUR business this fall is immense, *i. e.*, one hundred thousand dollars per month all in small trash. We are all made slaves of, but have reason to hope if such trade continues we may at some time be able to take a holiday.

March 14, '82

YOU will be pleased to know that our busi-

ness continues to grow, and has become a large one now. There is only one trouble now, and that is that the increase requires reinvestment almost as fast as our sales increase. We did near a million trade last year, and if we continue to gain as we have this first of '82, we shall reach $1,200,000 this year,—and I find a large business easier to manage than a small one.

Aug. 7th, '82

It seems but fair to repay you for your watchfulness of our interests by a few words as to our situation in this tag line of business, in which we are nearer to a monopoly than ever before. There have been about one hundred attempts made to obtain foothold in the Shipping Tag business, and up to this year about ten makers throughout the country, beside ourselves. This number has dwindled to seven makers who unitedly make one fifth of the goods made, and we the other four fifths. Before this year we estimated one third and two thirds. The seven makers sell only to consumers, while we supply fully 95 per cent of the trade with their goods. Besides our home market we are sending to the Coopers enough goods to stir up your home makers so that

they are using all sorts of devices to copy our Tags, and our London house has succeeded exactly, except our excellent stock, which is not made in England yet, nor do I believe they will be able to make it there for years to come at the cost of it here. Besides this, we believe that we are protected in a good margin in the excellence of our machinery, which we have been years in perfecting.

Our Mr. Sawyer, as a mechanic, I place next to yourself, of all the men that I ever knew, and while in the beginning the machines were of my own conception, conveyed to Charlie Moore, of Moore & Wyman, the improvements are all of Sawyer's making from time to time as experience taught the necessity.

I shall never lose sight of the fact that you planted the seed, and that you planted it in better soil than you, or I, or anybody else ever dreamed of. You will remember that you were the work boy and I the "play boy," and I attribute the success of this enterprise more to the fact that its development has been play to me than to any other one fact. Since the beginning I have been happier when attending to this offspring of yours than anywhere else.

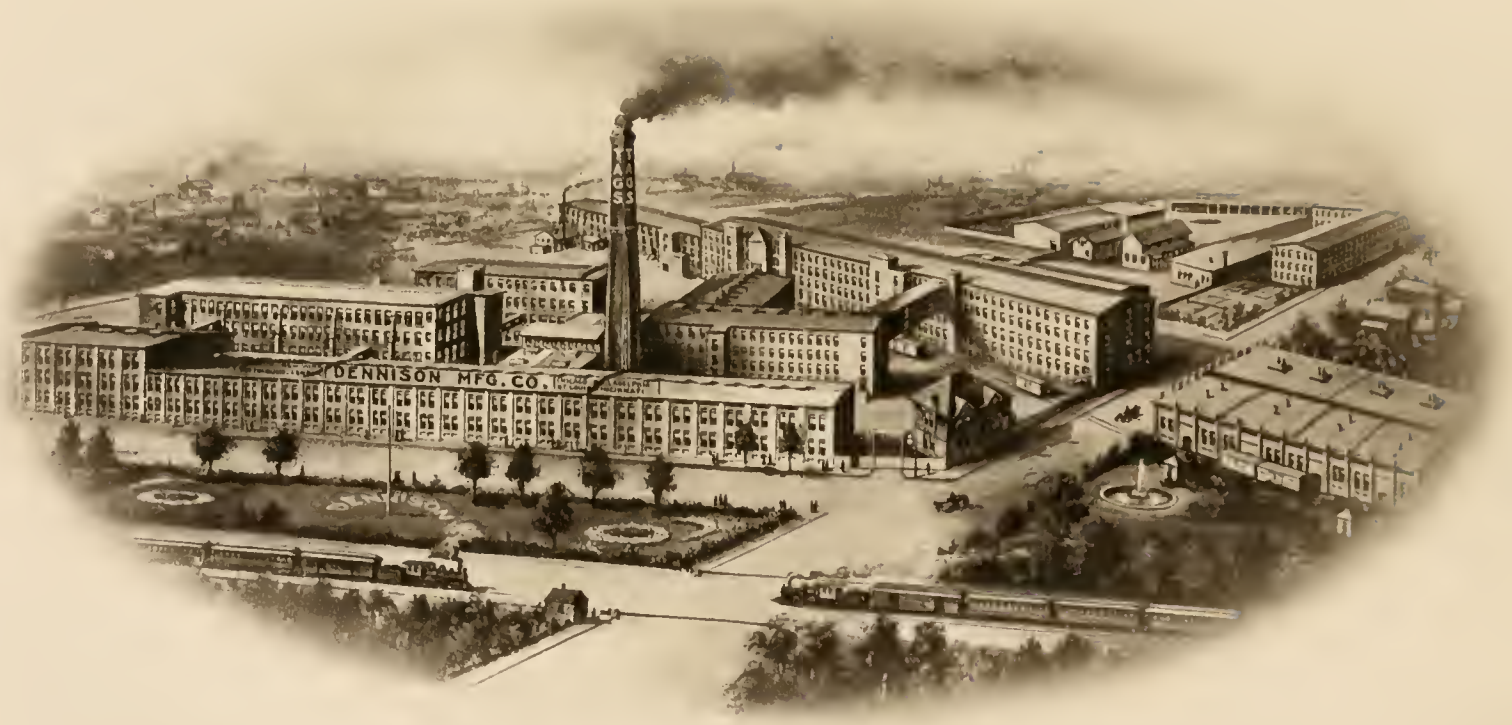
I shall go in for the Birmingham trade again, for I am sure that there are parties there, as well as everywhere else, that will prefer good goods to poor at a fair difference in cost.

Sept. 2, '82

Lucy can teach the English girls as well as she can Yankee if the same class of help is selected, and that is the true policy,—the better the class of help, the better the goods. Good goods will tell, and it's no matter how many of the jewelers say that "poor goods are just as good as the best, as we have to give them away;" but there will be lots that will pay for quality at the beginning and the others will be forced to follow. Our very best goods will find plenty of customers at fair profits.

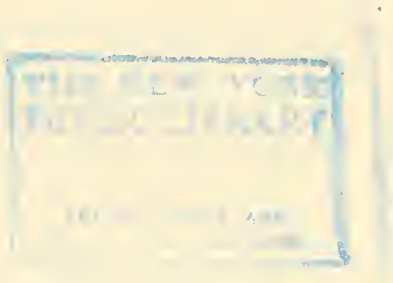
Apr. 15, '85

As to quality not counting with the mass of the Birmingham people, this may be true, but it will be strange if true of any community, and taking no stock in the fact that our goods alone should be governed in sale by prices only, I have steadily taken the other route, remembering our good old father's maxim



South Framingham Factory

1908



"*Whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well,*" and his instructions to "*first learn to work well, and then to work quickly.*" Always acting in business on this maxim and these instructions, I believe has contributed more toward our success than any one other policy. Following father's instructions, it costs but a trifle more to make good goods from the same materials than it does sloppy goods. Birmingham may be an exception to all other places, but I believe there is no man in the town that would not prefer good goods to poor, and a very large sprinkling of Birmingham and the world that will pay the difference in value. As we only ask for 15 per cent of the trade in England in our line, I think this will be much easier got by quality and price for it than by following the hue and cry of "cheap," for in the former goods I have seen little or nothing to compete with, and in the latter we have the whole nation to battle.

In our time we have bought out thirteen different concerns, everyone of which was forced to undersell us or not sell at all, and everyone of them was quoted by more or less of our customers saying their goods would answer just as well, etc.; and yet every man we bought owned up that he could not get an

order without first agreeing that it should be as good as Dennison's. So I don't care to have anybody buy or sell our goods that does not believe that quality should be considered with price just as much as it is in other articles of merchandise.

V

IN the very midst of the greatest business growth Mr. Dennison kept steadily at work upon plans to arrange his organization, so that its development might be continuous even after his own leadership should cease. His great heart desired to create something superior to his own mortality which should afford worthy occupation and opportunity to "his boys," and to their boys after them. It is hardly to be believed that before 1883 he foresaw in any definite way the time when he would be obliged to give over the reins,—it was too much his habit to depend confidently upon his rugged health; but his plans worked out as smoothly as if the future had been known, and when the end came his work was thorough and complete.

His forty years of consistent good health somewhat weakened the force of the first hints of its limits which came in 1876, and of which he writes:

"You know that I have been blessed with wonderful health all of my life, and have never felt the worse for wear until about three weeks ago (except the stitches twice dropped in the back I have not been confined to the house

a day since I was fourteen years old), when I was suddenly taken with a distressed feeling in the region of the heart, which for a week or so puzzled us all, but after that culminated into something of dyspepsia nature, which by good nursing has now nearly disappeared.

"The fact is, since Henry's absence I have had double duties, in fact almost treble, for I had to promise Hawks that I would go to New York every week during his absence, which I followed as long as able.

"This travelling was an irregularity, added to the hard work, and together I got beat. The warning is a good one to me that this old carcass, though ever so tough, won't stand too much."

The next warning he took more seriously.

"Yours of the 13th finds me at home keeled up with an ill turn like that of three years ago. Young Dr. Fred Rain, son of the old Bath Dr. Rain, is our family doctor, and he says too much smoking, and I guess he is right, for I whittled myself down to three per day and have recovered very fast; in fact, am about myself this morning. Guess with this second warning I'll quit, or at least limit myself to a few."

After the business was incorporated he was ready to slacken his own pace to some degree

and give to his helpers wider chance to gain experience. "My habits have changed from what they have been for the last twenty-seven years," he writes. "I am often ready to go home to dinner about one o'clock and always by three, when I adjourn to the club for my whist, which I am passionately fond of and indulge in nearly every afternoon and three evenings in the week. Solitaire I play, too."

In 1882 he reports himself as perfectly well. "Like yourself I never felt better in my life than now, though I guess if I made the long days that you do I should not stand it as well. I have much to engineer, but have such excellent lieutenants that I do it very easily."

In 1884 he went to England for the last time, and after another illness there he was obliged to exercise still more care. His letter of January, 1886, after he had returned to Boston, tells how completely his active life had been forced to adapt itself to the new conditions.

"I am advised of masterly inactivity as the only thing for my trouble, which is no doubt enlargement of the heart of pretty long standing, and I am assured of no immediate danger if I play the drone, which I do pretty essentially. I ride to the store in the morning and

drift about from one to another of the heads of the departments. At noon I walk slowly down to lunch with the 'Herald Club,' and at about three o'clock go to our little Temple Club in a herdic, and am taken up two flights of stairs in a sedan or chair, as my doctor does not permit me to walk either uphill or upstairs. We get up a game of whist, and I leave for home about 5.15, to take a course of rubbing for an hour, then dinner, and solitaire in the evening." Then he plunges headlong into the large enterprise again and closes with a lament over the sudden death of Mr. Benson, the able manager of the Western branches, the news of which had come that morning. "A very bright light was snuffed out, and we are all sad enough. The loss is heavy to the rest of the boys. I am feeling well enough, but only by playing the cold molasses rôle of slow, slow, slow."

This was the last letter he wrote to his brother. While there were times of hope for his recovery, on the whole his health declined, but his spirits were good, and he took such recreation as he could. To give him more variety of life and thought, a house was taken at Marblehead Neck, where he could watch the yachts come and go, and sweep the horizon

with his telescope for events on the sea. "In September before his death," a friend writes, "I saw him at Marblehead, reclining in a chair and watching the various yachts as they sailed around the Galatea, which had anchored in the harbor the day before. During the afternoon he came and sat on the piazza. He talked, as he always did, in a most interesting way."

He was then close to death, which came quietly to him on the twenty-second day of September, 1886.

The passing of his life brought forth many expressions of the great love he had won for himself among his hundreds of acquaintances. Those whose contact with him had been only through business realized how much deeper than commercial their relations with him had been, and felt the loss as if it were in their own families.

"The death of Mr. Dennison," writes a stationers' journal, "takes from our trade one of its best and greatest,—not greatest and best in outward show and pomp or in official position, but the peer of any in ability, integrity, true manhood,—known wherever the English language speaks, and known only to be respected. Out of a brave, cheerful soul, he looked invariably on the bright side of life,

and met disappointment with a smile so sunny that his friends never knew when discouragement came."

Here perhaps lies one reason for his greatness,—simply that he was broad enough to be a business man and a man at the same time. Employees, customers, and those from whom he bought he could handle with great business skill and yet regard with deep affection. As he went among his employees in the factory, the workers heard only a kind voice and pleasant words; he met those whom he knew with a friendly hand-clasp, nodded to others not so well known, with his face beaming with kindliness. To them he always seemed pleased with the plant and the people employed there, and interested in its smallest details. One of his employees writes that "there was never an unkind word said of him; though in all his dealings with his help he was very strict and wanted everyone to do his best, yet he would always see full justice done anyone in his employ." Another who worked many years under him says: "His whole attitude toward his employees was one of liberality and encouragement, and was such as to inspire all to render their best efforts toward the attainment of success in any undertaking in which he was

interested. Because his leadership was actuated by the best motives of which human nature is capable, it was a constant delight to work with him." Only big, warm-hearted justice could thus combine relations of authority and affection.

His customers also felt first his broad humanity in his pleasant greeting and interest in their personal affairs. Being too busy one forenoon to see a man who had come from Detroit, he asked him to drive about Boston in the late afternoon. After forty years the man writes of Mr. Dennison's obvious happiness and good will toward all, and adds: "Of course he knew that I was a good customer, but I sincerely believe he would have done just the same if I were not." Almost all speak of the feeling of confidence in him which was engendered on the first meeting. An early customer says he was sure that any order given to such a man would have good attention, and another writes that "Mr. Dennison's persistent and well directed efforts *forced* us to buy of him."

With those from whom he purchased he was on terms of equal breadth and confidence, clearly shown by the following letter from a prominent paper manufacturer:

"We supplied Mr. Dennison for nearly thirty years of almost continuous business, and during the whole time our company never had a contract with him, but simply made up what paper he might wish, and the question of price was discussed from time to time and settled to our mutual satisfaction.

"I recall, especially, one incident in regard to this. I made a social call on him one evening when he was living at the Norfolk House, and, as I was leaving, he said, 'Business is getting pretty hard and we shall be forced to have a lower price for paper.' I said, 'Very well, Mr. Dennison. We are only making at present a fair profit on your paper, but if you need a lower price, tell me what it is, and we will make it.' His answer was, 'Wait. Don't make any change until I tell you.' I heard nothing about it for several months, but one afternoon when I had a meeting on other matters, he said, 'The time has come when we are forced to have the reduction I spoke to you about, and we will have to ask you to take one-quarter cent a pound off your price.'

"This shows how willing he was that we should make a reasonable profit, and not try to buy our paper at the lowest price he could force us to take. I do not need to add that

our business relations were always of the pleasantest kind. He often said in a joking way that he was a junior partner in our business, and had he been one, he could not have looked after our interests any more than he did."

So by all classes of associates in commercial life he was thought of as just and straightforward. "Honest" is the word among the first to be mentioned by those who knew him, but his was an honesty deeper and stronger than mere passive obedience to the highest law; it was the live spirit of honesty pervading every act, whether great or small, which shone from his eyes and made men instinctively respect, love him, and believe in him.

But there have been many honest failures, and something more must be added to compound success. One point in his business character which should have great emphasis is the direction in which he expended his energy. Without a thought of self in any business question, discounting the present, and with patience and confidence, he aimed steadily at the true advancement of the Dennison Company. Ex-Governor Claflin said that Mr. Dennison "never seemed to think the business had reached its limit, but could be en-

larged indefinitely." His objective was not a fixed goal at which all effort should cease, but was the ideal of progress itself,—an upward growth from month to month in the direction of improvement in the human sense rather than the financial. In fact, the money return was entirely secondary, as many of his letters indicate, and he loved best to turn the profits back into the business as a preparation for still further development. When he could see that a move was in the right direction and that the time was ripe, his impulse was to adopt it at once without too much weighing of the immediate difficulties. One of his colleagues said, "He never counted the cost, but trusted to a luck which rarely went against him;" but luck being once for all just luck, this statement argues true intuition,—an ability to see a truth which lies beyond the reach of rational processes.

It was the inevitable result of his methods that his business should be a service to all who came into contact with it, by giving just values in every direction. To employees this meant square treatment, and to customers that his goods should be the best of their kind. That whatever he made and sold should be of good quality and good value was the key-

note of the policy which he carried out to the smallest detail; not only must his goods have internal merit, but they must be pleasing to the eye as well. His attempts to be consistent are reflected in a paragraph to Aaron. "There are certain absurdities in the English people that no Yank could ever meet. For instance, the little tag you sent us was strung with a six-cable cord, and the tag was made of a stock that a single cord of the six would pull out. We try to use the tag and string which conform to each other." His negative definition of "well done" is suited only for a man of energy, courage, and patience: "Nothing is well done if it can be done better."

In Mr. Dennison's inventive ability is found one important cause of the rapid growth of his business, because it especially devoted itself to the development of new goods. In this direction it could gain big results on account of its combination with his great capacity for putting himself in another's place and realizing his needs. Mechanically, he was untrained, but with a curious intuition for right principles he was able to lay out the general form of a machine and to see that it was being developed in the proper way. With the plan once in his mind, he was persistent in his efforts to

see it realized, and won some splendid victories after long discouragement. His very freedom from the details of technique allowed him full play of imagination, catching often a simple method which had escaped the attention of those more familiar with the process. A very important experience in a paper mill, as told by its owner, is a case in point.

"When we first began making paper for your company, the quality was not very satisfactory. Mr. E. W. Dennison disliked to use it, as his desire was to use a much higher grade, that is, a rope paper; but as he often said, 'The trade is demanding cheap grades and you are forced to make them.' But he was anxious that we should improve the quality of our paper, and we made a great many trials showing more or less improvement each time, though still not quite succeeding in getting just what he wanted.

"In a conversation with him one day, about a possible further improvement, I said, 'Why not go up to the mills, Mr. Dennison, and spend a day or two and make some trials yourself?' He said at once, 'May I do so? I should like it very much.' I said, 'Certainly; the mills are yours. Go up and take them, and make any trials you care to.'

"He made the trip, and the result was the suggestion from him to change the direction of the paper made on the last two cylinders, running the paper toward the wet end of the machine and joining it with the paper made on the first two cylinders, so that the two rough sides would come together in the centre, and the paper thereby be made much smoother. I cannot tell how many years paper-makers had been running cylinder machines without seeing the advantage this would be, but he saw it almost at once. I hardly need to dwell upon this. Anyone conversant with paper-making will at once see what a great advantage it was, and had Mr. Dennison taken a patent upon the idea (and he could have secured one without trouble, I am sure), it would have been worth a great deal of money to him; but he gave our company, and paper-makers in general, the benefit of his suggestion, without any hesitation. All of the machines having four or more cylinders that we run now make paper in this way, and at a very decided gain in the quality."

His inventive power, unlike his brother's, can hardly be said to stand alone; it was rather a manifestation of his capacity for throwing himself wholly into a subject, and allow-

ing his imagination to become absorbed in it.

The pressure which brought into effective play his other abilities was an enthusiastic willingness to work. He loved hard tasks and hard problems the more because they were not easy, and was always ready to go beyond his share simply because he was seldom conscious of just how much "his share" was. His best work and the work he most relished was that of originating rather than developing, and he always had time and patience for any new suggestion of improvement, but was glad when he could pass the working out to one of his helpers.

His advice to some of the young men he so delighted to help contains much of the richness of his own nature.

"Make the best goods, be prompt and honorable in your dealings, and, with ambition and industry, your success is only a question of time, provided your health holds good.

"If you should find better results from your move than you anticipated, my advice is for you to take it coolly, and not branch too fast; and if on the contrary the thing does not pan out as you expected, do not be discouraged, but work patiently to win by doing your business right, and you can turn defeat into

victory if you only place the victory far enough ahead."

"I had not been in business for myself a great while when my box shop was burned out, and twice as much as I was worth destroyed; and again in January, 1857, I had a balance to the good of $10,000, and January, '58, I was cleaned out and under water; but keeping my eye on the picture ahead I managed to keep my pluck up and feel confident of ultimate success, which kept me cheerful."

That such a man should have had boundless enthusiasm and deep love for the work he had chosen is easy to understand; and that he should have inspired enthusiasm and loyalty was inevitable. If he had done but this one thing for "his boys," he would have made them a priceless gift by teaching them the Joy of Work.

"This great amount of business has come on so gradually that the whole past of it seems like a dream, and the accomplishment of this result has seemed more like recreation than labor. From all appearances of the pride seemingly taken by each and every one of my good helpers, I am confident that their own progress has been fun to them."

The man of business left what he wished

to leave,—not merely a fortune won for those for whom he wished to provide, but a living and self-perpetuating organization which is not only his monument, but a source of ever new service to the community. His nature was too big to be made sordid by his great love of business; on the contrary the force of his character made that business human in principle and impulse.

All the qualities which found effective play in his commercial life found a still broader field in his social life. Frank in bearing, genial in temper, and cordial in manner, men liked to meet him, and his simplicity and sincerity made first acquaintances fast friends. A chat with him was always a true gain. "He had the most uplifting, exhilarating effect upon me," one wrote; "I always felt as if I had taken a new lease of life whenever I saw him." His cheery and encouraging smile and word lightened the loads of those he met, and gave them strength and courage. Mr. Campbell, whose physical blindness made his inner vision the clearer, wrote a letter of great beauty, which is given in full.

Friday, Feb. 19, 1886
S.S. Oregon

My dear Mr. Dennison:

I was much grieved and pained to leave Boston without seeing you, but, my dear old friend, I cannot sail without writing to you how much your lovingkindness and sympathy have always been to me.

Many years ago when I was a stranger, your thoughtful kindness and cheery words strewed my path with roses. Many is the time when I have been discouraged, I have sought you simply for the encouragement of your sunny nature. My religion teaches me that love to God is indicated by our love to our neighbor, and by this test, my dear Dennison, a blessed welcome awaits you; and when my work is over, one of my warm anticipations will be meeting you again. We may never meet again in this world, we shall meet in the next—my physical darkness will have passed away, and who will be more happy to realize it than my old friend? My love, sympathy, and hope are with you.

Yours gratefully,

F. J. Campbell,
per G. M. C.

Dr. Edward Everett Hale, at Mr. Dennison's burial services, spoke of his "ready sympathy and that fresh, unselfish kindness which made for him so many friends." And then:

"If you met him for half a minute you were glad, and you went through the day remembering something encouraging and good-natured which he had said to you; and if it was your good fortune to spend a longer time with him, the impression was just the same. The half hour remained with you as an illustration of the generosity of his life, and you felt that it was a matter of course with him to go outside himself in his sympathy—tender and certain—with those who were around him.

"I am disposed to think that it was this moral quality—recognized by everyone who knew him—which built up his successful life, in a sense with which we cannot speak even of his inventive or other business faculty. He wanted to help those around him,—he liked to see them succeed."

One feature was so characteristic of Mr. Dennison that it was natural Dr. Hale should have begun with a mention of it. "Our friend," he said, "would have been unwilling that I should make any public statement re-

garding him, or those characteristics which made us love him." Another writes: "I never knew any other man in his position, and with his abilities, who all his life never by action or word showed a patch of conceit, or assumed anything he was not." And again: "To those who knew him well, the modest estimate he placed upon his own abilities when success had been so marked and so ably won was evidence of a well balanced mind and the largeness of his view of life."

His, indeed, was the true manly humility,—not self-depreciation, but self-effacement. Because he was so heartily interested and so vitally in touch with the men and the facts about him, he was simply unconscious of any desire to make an estimate of himself.

Since his mind was upon others rather than upon himself, true courtesy and tact were natural to him, yet without conventionality. Of his charities it was said: "His gifts were strengthened by sound and helpful advice and sanctified by his words of sympathy." Yet he was a "man's man," full-blooded and well muscled, lover of outdoors and a good sportsman. He went into camp with zest, and gave himself up to the influences of the place and the good fellowship of his companions.

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He was fond of animals, of horses especially. It was long before he felt that he could afford the "span of blacks," of which he often speaks, but when they came he took great pleasure in them. A "scandalous" colt figures in his domestic letters,—an animal which gave much delight to him and quite as much terror to his family.

He believed in recreation and allowed himself all that he could afford, well understanding its value to the man of business. He sought companionship in his diversions, and especially the society of young people, finding keener pleasure in their enjoyment than in his own. For them, indeed, he showed special consideration, delighting to go out of his way to pay them attention. Many of his younger employees he showed over the factory, pointing out his pet machines, or took them to his summer home at Nantasket on fishing trips, and even met one youngster at the Newtonville station after ten at night, lighting the way to his house with a lantern. Upon the minds of young men he made a most vivid impression, and to them his memory remains an unfailing inspiration.

It can readily be imagined that on his many trips in this country and abroad he was never

lonesome so long as there was a human being near him, and that he was able to find in each one something of value. His interest in the politics of his city and state was very keen, and his opinions and advice were regularly sought by a dozen or more of Boston's strongest and most earnest men.

Thoroughly in harmony with his character, his appearance attracted attention at once. "The tall, powerful frame and erect carriage of the head expressed the vigor, power of command and grasp of affairs of his mind, while the eye that looked straight at you, and the words in which he gave his views, without fear, policy or evasion, told unmistakably his love of truth, sincerity and directness, and his contempt for falsehood, trickery or meanness. More than most men, he stood, as the saying is, 'four square' to the world, and you would not be disappointed, no matter upon which of the many phases and problems of business life you might seek his counsel." An impression was created at once of force and kindliness, resource and simplicity, ability and trustworthiness, sympathy and self-control.

The essence of all that was good in him centred in the home which he loved beyond any measure. "It occurs to me," he said, "that

the real comforts attained and the most genuine happiness are those under our own roof. All others are but 'littles' compared with the home joys." His home furnished the inspiration of his working life and the rest from it. "For my part I am firmly resolved to see what I can do to make those that I am so dependent upon for happiness in this world (and, I believe, in the next) happy themselves."

His religious belief was simple and deep, though not of the devotional type. Dr. Hale says: "This man would never have called himself a religious man. It is, therefore, for me, and others who knew him well, to say all the more definitely that this unselfishness and tenderness of his sprang from his real religion. He did not care for himself alone,—he wanted to serve God and he wanted to serve man. In that sense he found out the way in which to unite as if in one family those whose daily lives were all wrought in with his; and you and I here, who are not to see his face again, are in no danger of forgetting his words of tenderness or of advice, or the good-natured cordiality of his welcome, for it had in it the reality—the one enduring element—of the word and work of one who trusts God."

With tireless devotion to his home and his

work, with keen insight and high standards, with true humanity and deep sincerity, he combined in his big heart thoughtfulness of all about him, cheeriness, and simplicity. He led by persuasion, and won his life's victory by the force of his kindly nature. His greatness responds to the test of the years in the ever potent influence of his character upon those who knew him, with whom all that is highest and best is summed up in the word "Dennisonian." The true function of man's life was fulfilled by him in that his world was better for his having lived; and he proved beyond question that a successful business man can also be a true man.